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SUBJECT: ESTONIA: EMBASSY'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE RACIAL  
TOLERANCE

REF: TALLINN 221

11. (U) Summary: Discussion in Estonia about tolerance and integration has focused mainly on the cultural and linguistic divide between the Estonian and Russian communities. Looking forward, the GOE intends to broaden its Integration Action Plan to include initiatives designed to address integration of new, and non-European, arrivals. The timing is auspicious. In the wake of several racially-motivated incidents involving Embassy staff and the wider diplomatic community, on March 2 the Ambassador initiated a Tolerance Action Plan to raise awareness and sensitivity with GOE officials, law enforcement, academics, NGOs, and with the Estonian public. On June 6 the issue gained prominence when Dutch Ambassador Hans Glaubitz reported to the press that he was leaving Estonia due to racist and homophobic incidents against his African-Cuban partner. End Summary.

#### A SMALL BUT GROWING PROBLEM

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12. (U) While Estonia's minority population (of non-European descent) is tiny, membership in the EU, rapid economic growth, growing tourism, and declining birthrates will increase immigration pressure and potentially lead to an increase in the number of racial minorities (i.e., foreign workers, students, tourists, immigrants, etc.). Reported racially-motivated incidents have been relatively limited in number to date, and law enforcement officials tell us that there is no evidence of a statistical spike. However, over the past year there have been six incidents of U.S. nationals being racially harassed and/or intimidated. Anecdotal evidence from members of the wider diplomatic community, foreign tourists, students, and business people also indicate that challenges may lie ahead.

13. (SBU) On Feb 21, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report on Estonia made a number of recommendations to improve the atmosphere for tolerance. The report has been criticized in some quarters for having been poorly sourced and based on incomplete information. However, ECRI made a number of recommendations and observations with which we agree:

- Estonia has no hate crime specific legislation, and Estonian prosecution of hate crimes has not been aggressive. Punishment for first-time offenders is particularly lax.

- More efforts must be made in awareness-raising to ensure that law enforcement officials and victims of

race hate crimes are aware of appropriate provisions of the Criminal Code allowing for prosecution of hate crimes.

- Estonian authorities ought to add the teaching of the benefits of diversity and living in a multicultural society in school programs.

- Estonian authorities need to provide support for the Press Council of Estonia and the Estonian Newspaper Association for training journalists on issues related to racism and racial discrimination.

- More training is needed for law enforcement on issues related to racism and racial discrimination.

#### RAISING AWARENESS FROM THE BOTTOM UP

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¶4. (U) In March the Ambassador initiated a Mission Tolerance Action Plan to begin a conversation with our Estonian interlocutors on tolerance issues. The initiative is based on the premise that it is far better for Estonia to tackle this problem while it is fairly limited than to try to address it later when it may be more entrenched. Our strategy has been to share both positive and negative experiences from one of the world's most diverse nations, rather than provide a preachy laundry list of what Estonia must do to fix the problem. We believe the approach has been appreciated, and, given the positive reception from GOE officials, NGOs, and Estonian civil society, is hitting its mark.

¶5. (U) To date the Embassy has organized the following series of events and activities, specifically targeting

GOE officials, local government officials, educators, NGOs, law enforcement, students, and young people in order to raise the level of awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of tolerance issues. Additional events are being planned for the coming months.

- On April 18 Post hosted a DVC between the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Estonian working-level government officials (national and local) and NGOs to discuss promoting tolerance in education and sharing best practices. The Estonian participants found the SPLC's relationship with local government and law enforcement very informative, and the SPLC has promised to share its latest tolerance material for use and adaptation by Estonian officials.

- A recently-returned ILVP recipient (February/March), Ken Koort, Advisor to Minister of Population and Migration Paul Eerik-Rummo, wrote an article on May 20 based on his experience in the U.S. for one of Estonia's leading Russian dailies. Koort praised U.S. multiculturalism and reflected on what Estonia could learn from U.S. diversity.

- Supervisor Special Agent (SSA) Stan Strauss, FBI Civil Rights Unit (CRU), offered a presentation on U.S. hate-crime legislation, enforcement, and investigation to Estonia's Public Service Academy on May 30. SSA Strauss spoke to an audience of MFA officials, law enforcement, and Public Service Academy instructors. He explained how hate crime specific legislation has aided the FBI's work, and stressed that Estonia need not make the same mistake U.S. and other European countries had made by waiting until the problem became bigger before acting.

- The Ambassador and Embassy staff participated in a panel discussion entitled "Cultural Diversity: Dialogue or Conflict?" as part of a conference on Estonian minorities on June 2. The Ambassador spoke on the U.S. perspective and experience in promoting racial tolerance and diversity, and a diverse group of Embassy staff provided views on the theme. The message was positively

received and followed by a lengthy discussion on the challenges facing Estonia in dealing with its current minorities. Molodjzh Estonii, Estonia's leading Russian-language paper, praised the Ambassador for promoting diversity in Estonia. The Ambassador's speech will be turned into an OpEd for future publication in an Estonian-language paper in order to reach the broadest possible audience.

- During a six-week exchange program in April and May, visiting Fulbright School Administrator Gale Frazier helped to increase racial sensitivity and awareness among Estonian youth. Frazier, an African-American Director of Education at a private school in Chicago, spoke to at least 500 students at more than ten schools. In many cases, Frazier was both the first American and the first person of African origin the students had ever met. Frazier's charismatic talks introduced children to cultural differences between the United States and Estonia, including the racial diversity common in U.S. schools. Her talks generated both national and local press coverage ranging from Postimees, Estonia's paper of record, to Sakala, a leading regional paper from Estonia's heartland.

- With special funding secured from State/EUR, the Embassy is providing \$4,000 for the Tartu Black Nights Film Festival to screen U.S. films on the theme of cultural and racial tolerance. We hope that this film festival -- run by Estonians for Estonians -- will help generate widespread public discussion on the issues of tolerance and diversity.

- Embassy has requested DS/IP (reftel) to provide for Estonian audiences the "Racially Motivated Violence" seminar presented by Chuck Hunter in Riga in January 2006. RSO is also regularly in contact with the wider diplomatic community and the police to remain engaged on this issue.

#### RAISING AWARENESS AT THE TOP

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¶6. (SBU) On May 30 the Ambassador hosted a private lunch for Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs and presidential candidate Paul-Eerik Rummo, Minister of Internal Affairs Kalle Lannet, MP Mart Nutt, Minister

Rummo's advisor Ken Koort and SSA Stan Strauss to discuss our tolerance awareness activities and the conclusions from these events. The Ambassador spoke at length on the need for Estonia to begin to think beyond the traditional and historical Estonian/Russian community dichotomy in light of anecdotal evidence of recent incidents against racial minorities.

¶7. (SBU) The Estonians agreed that with a declining birthrate and booming economy, Estonia is likely to face increasing immigration pressure and a more multicultural society. With this in mind Minister Rummo said the GOE will broaden the next Integration Action Plan to reach out to new immigrants. In the meantime, Minister Lannet said the Estonian police and security force were grateful for the information Post has provided concerning racially motivated incidents involving U.S. nationals. Given the small population, Lannet noted that it only took a small number of agitators to create a disproportionate amount of trouble and attention. (KAPO, the Estonian security police, estimates there are 100 active skinheads in Estonia, with approximately half residing in Tallinn.) Even a few incidents can create a perception of a much larger racial problem, and can impact the economy, especially tourism and foreign investment.

¶8. (SBU) MP Nutt, Estonia's representative on the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, noted that whatever problem existed was undoubtedly

exacerbated by Estonia's larger problem with alcoholism. Most of the instigators of racial incidents were drunk at the time, he said. Minister Rummo directed blame to local government leaders who have been far too passive on integration and tolerance promotion issues. Even on the Russian-Estonian divide, local leaders have spent little political capital to create bridges between parallel communities through schools, community activities, etc. It was, therefore, not surprising for Minister Rummo that tackling racial intolerance is not even on most local governments' radar screens.

¶9. (SBU) There was general agreement that while reported racial incidents are relatively limited and non-violent in nature, building sensitivity and awareness among the population is a long-term process. As the Estonian police are already struggling to maintain the necessary number of officers to operate sufficiently (as many officers leave the force for better paying jobs in the private sector in Estonia or abroad), it is difficult to adequately train and sensitize their police on hate crime and tolerance issues.

#### THE DUTCH BOMBSHELL

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¶10. (U) On June 6 the Dutch Ambassador to Estonia, Hans Glaubitz, informed the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad that he was curtailing his tour, complaining of persistent and racist homophobic abuse. Glaubitz said that though he and his partner, an African-Cuban man, were well received by GOE officials, they were regularly insulted when out in public. Glaubitz said on behalf of his partner, "It is not very nice to be regularly abused by drunken skinheads as a 'nigger' and to be continuously gawped at as if you have just stepped out of a UFO." Glaubitz's statement has not only featured prominently in Estonian papers, but has also been picked up by international news organizations, thereby provoking considerable public debate within Estonia on the topic of racism and homophobia.

¶11. (U) In the wake of Glaubitz's announcement, several media (Estonian and international) have contacted the Embassy for comment (in part because Glaubitz made reference to an inter-Embassy security-related email citing incidents of harassment against and/or witnessed by U.S. Embassy employees). The Embassy spokesman used these requests as an opportunity to say that although reported racial incidents in Estonia are relatively few in number, it is important for there to be constructive and open dialog on the issue before it becomes a larger problem.

¶12. (U) The international media coverage has clearly embarrassed the GOE and the general public, creating a backlash among some Estonian public figures who have started questioning Glaubitz's claim. The MFA has consistently denied it received information on

Glaubitz's problems (either from the Glaubitz or the Dutch Embassy) prior to the announcement. Moreover, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet claimed that Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot expressed regret over the whole affair and said Glaubitz's action was "not a wise thing to do." Meanwhile, the Estonian Parliament on June 15 passed an amendment to the Penal Code that will penalize incitement of "hatred, violence or discrimination" based on sexual orientation. (The existing law provides protection on the basis of nationality, race, color, sex, language, origin, religion, political opinion, financial and social status.)

#### COMMENT

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¶13. (SBU) The controversy over Glaubitz's departure has catapulted the issue of tolerance in Estonia to the

forefront. It is unfortunate that Glaubitz's departure is becoming more the focus of the story rather than the larger tolerance issues, leading some Estonian newspapers to grouse that Estonians do not deserve this "smear" on their reputation. MFA officials have also relayed to us their dismay and disappointment with Glaubitz's actions, but have been consistently positive on the Embassy's reporting of racially motivated incidents and Embassy-sponsored activities. We believe that our approach of sharing rather than lecturing is helping to create an open and frank dialogue with the Estonians on this important issue.

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